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CHAPTER 1: 17-22

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Matthew Chapter 1: 17-22

Verse 17- *Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations. And from David to the transmigration (the Syriac has exile) of Babylon are fourteen generations: and from the transmigration of Babylon to Christ are fourteen generations.* From Abraham, therefore, unto Christ are forty-two generations. S. Luke (chap. iii.) enumerates seventy-seven generations, but he places no stress upon the number as S. Matthew does. Though S. Augustine, c. 2, *de consensu Evang.*, c. 4., is of opinion that entire remission and abolition of all sins, which is effected through Christ, is denoted by the seventy-seven generations. Whence Christ commanded that forgiveness should be extended to an erring brother seventy times seven. (Matt. xviii. 22.)

By generations, you must understand all the persons, both those begetting and those begotten. These are the fourteen. For the Greek is not *γένεσις*, i.e. *generation*, properly called, but *γενέα*, i.e. *offspring, race, family, and children, the duration of the*

Conceived: that is at one and the same time, *conceived, formed, and animated*, for this is the proper meaning of *γεννηθέν*—that is, *begotten, born*. See Abul., *quæst.* 52, and S. Thomas, 3 *part. quæst.* 33 & 34, where he teaches that the Body of Christ was in the very instant of its Conception, as regarded all its members, 1, perfectly formed and organized by the Holy Ghost; 2, animated with a reasonable soul; 3, assumed by the **WORD**. 4. That the soul of Christ was filled with all wisdom, and the grace of that Headship which flows from thence into all the members—*i.e.*, to all the faithful. 5. That the same soul saw God through the Beatific Vision. 6. That the same had the use of reason, even apart from the Beatific Vision, by means of infused knowledge, and that, in this way, It knew that It was hypostatically united to the Word, and therefore gave God highest thanks because of this vision and exaltation: and that God revealed to the soul of Christ His own will, concerning His death upon the Cross, that He might thereby redeem and save mankind; and that the soul of Christ forthwith accepted this, and offered himself to God as a whole burnt-offering, a victim for sin for the salvation of the world, with the utmost humility, obedience, reverence, love, exultation, and joyfulness of mind, saying—“Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will. Yea, O my God, I am content to do it: Thy law is written in my heart.” (Ps. xxxix. 8, and Heb. x. 7.)

Verse 21- *She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* If Jesus, as follows from this, is Emmanuel, that is, God with us; if He is the offspring and the Son of Blessed Mary, as is here said, then she is not only Mother of Christ but Mother of God, as defined by the Council of Ephesus against Nestorius. For Mother and Son are relative terms. Moreover, Valentinus is condemned by this passage, who taught that Christ brought down a celestial body from heaven, and passed through the Blessed Virgin as through a conduit-pipe. But she who bears a son is really the mother of the son; and furnishes, and indeed provides his body and all his limbs.

Jesus, that is, Saviour. This was Christ’s proper name, here foretold by the Angel, but given Him at circumcision, a name which signifies and represents His office and dignity—yea, compendiously His whole life.

Verse 22- *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

The Syriac is: *And they shall call his name Amanuil*, which is explained, *God with us*. The Persian has, *Immanuel*, that is, because God dwelleth in us. The Egyptian version—*And they shall give him the name Emmanuel*, the interpretation of which is, *for God is with us*. S. Matthew to the reader, or, as some think, the Angel to Joseph, here brings forward the prophecy in Isa. vii. 14, to signify that it was now being fulfilled in this Conception of the Blessed Virgin, his wife, and would be perfectly fulfilled when she brought forth. And therefore he called Joseph the son of David, because the same thing was promised by God to David. I have fully expounded this prophecy in my commentary on Isa. vii., which see.

life of one man. For the generations, exactly numbered, are only thirteen in the first Tesseradecade, as you will see if you count the recurrence of the word “begat;” which word is repeated thirteen times; because in it alone Abraham is reckoned the first, and David the last generation. But in the second Tesseradecade, David, the first in it, is not reckoned; nor yet in the third, Jeconias the first name; because those persons have been already named and enumerated as the last in the second and third Tesseradecades. Therefore, in the third Tesseradecade, one generation must be added—namely, Jehoiakim begat Jehoiachin—in order that it may consist of fourteen generations; that is to say, of fourteen persons begetting and begotten, as I have already said. All the generations then are precisely forty-one; but the persons begetting and begotten are forty-two, because the generation of the first—namely, Abraham—is not reckoned here, but is presupposed as being known from the Book of Genesis.

You may ask, with what object S. Matthew so accurately enumerates these three Tesseradecades of generations? The answer is, because he wishes to pass in review the threefold condition of the Jewish people—the first, the *quasi* democratic state under the several Patriarchs and Judges, such as Othniel, Gideon, Samson, Eli, Samuel, &c., who presided over Israel from Abraham to David; the second, the monarchical, under kings, as David and his descendants, until the captivity; the third, the aristocratic, under dukes and pontiffs, as Judas, Jonathan, Simon, and the rest of the Maccabees, from the Babylonish captivity unto Christ. Matthew signifies that this threefold condition and government of the people was thrice changed, and must be a fourth time changed by Christ, and ended in Christ, who brought in an eternal kingdom. Thus the Fathers and commentators *passim*.

Whence Nazianzen, in his poem on the genealogy of Christ says:—

“Thus he deduced a royal race, and kingly sceptre.”

Maldonatus adds a medical analogy. In fevers, and other diseases, physicians call the fourteenth the critical day, and the most perilous. Agreeably, therefore, to the nature of man, after each period of fourteen generations, God seems to have wished to change the condition of His people, that one form of government, as it were, growing sick and failing, a better one might be born and succeed it, until, through Christ, the best of all should be substituted, which should heal and correct the defects and weakness of the three preceding, and establish the kingdom of the Church, flourishing, sound, and eternal.

Lastly, Matthew enumerates forty-two generations by three Tesseradecades, so as to make it a probable conjecture in the mind of his reader, that it was fitting that Christ should come after this exact number of generations. For as there were fourteen generations before the kingdom of the Jews was established, fourteen during its continuance, after which,

during fourteen generations, it evidently declined, so, by a probable conjecture, it might be supposed, that after these last fourteen generations, the kingdom fading away, it was to be restored to a better state by Messiah. For as there were fourteen generations before, and fourteen in the kingdom, so there were as many after the kingdom of Israel until Christ. Again, before the kingdom the promise of Christ was made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; in the kingdom to David and Solomon; after the kingdom the same promise was repeated to Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, &c., that there might be a feeling that all the promises made concerning Christ, both before, during, and after the kingdom were ended and fulfilled in Christ.

Abraham begins, David ends the first Tesseradecade; Solomon begins, Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin ends the second; Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin begins, Christ ends the third. And He is the end of the law, and the deliverer of the captive people and the captive world. So Francisc. Lucas. For the Jews knew from the decline and failure of their commonwealth, and especially when the sceptre was taken away from Judah by Herod, according to the prophecy of Jacob, Genesis xlix. 10, that the Advent of Messiah might certainly be expected. Whence their kingdom being broken up, and this sceptre transferred, S. Matthew here teaches that Messiah was now come, and was none other than Jesus Christ. And thus he would persuade the Jews to believe in Him. *Symbolically*, Origen (*Hom. 27 in Num.*) and S. Jerome (*Epist. ad Fabiolam de 42 Mansion.*), remark, that those forty-two generations correspond to the forty-two stations of the Israelites in the wilderness, by which they arrived at the land of Canaan promised to Abraham. Similarly, through the forty-two generations we arrive at the Messiah, or the Christ, promised to the same Abraham, and through Christ, at the land of the living, promised to the saints in heaven.

Again, the number fourteen, because it contains twice seven, by which the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost is signified, denotes the gift of the same Holy Spirit in two-fold abundance to man, as it was in Christ, who, indeed, by a like symbol, having suffered on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, when the moon was full, redeemed us by His death, and merited abundance of graces for us. Wherefore the Psalmist sings concerning Him, Ps. lxxi.: "In his days shall the righteous flourish, yea and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth." Listen to S. Ambrose's, *Oration on the death of Theodosius*: "In the number fourteen we have received man's perfection; whence the Lord's Passover received the form of its celebration, on the fourteenth day of the moon. Wherefore he who celebrates the Passover ought to be perfect, ought to love the Lord Jesus, who, loving His own people with a perfect love, offered Himself to His Passion. A notable mystery is in the number, since the Father delivered up his only Son for us all, when the moon was shining with a full orb of light. For like this is the Church, which piously celebrates the Passover of our Lord Jesus Christ. It abideth for ever, like the moon at the full. Whosoever shall well celebrate here the Lord's Passover, shall be in light, everlastingly."

Anagogically, the number forty-two is composed of six into seven, For six times seven makes forty-two. The six denotes the labours of this life, whereby we come to the seven, or the sabbath of rest and eternal felicity. For in the six first days of the world

should rather doubt concerning His own generation, than concerning His Mother's purity."

It appears from all this that Joseph did not accompany the Blessed Virgin when she, very shortly after her Conception of Christ, visited S. Elizabeth. For if he had been in her company, and had seen and heard the great and wonderful things which befell her, they would have removed all his scruples, and he would not have thought of putting her away. And especially when S. Elizabeth said to the Blessed Virgin: "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? He would have known from thence, that not only had she conceived of God, but that she had conceived God Himself, and that she was carrying Him in her womb.

Observe that Joseph is here called *just*—that is, a man of probity—forasmuch as he was one who wished, out of charity, to consult for the good fame, yea, even for the dignity of his spouse, when he thinks of putting away privily one whom he thought himself unworthy of. S. Jerome and Theophylact think that husbands were commanded by the old law to traduce and accuse before the judges their wives, if they were guilty of adultery. But they adduce no place in which such a precept is given. For the passage in Num. v. 2 only permits such a thing to be done, but does not order it.

To make her a public example. Not, to send her away to her own house, as Abul. thinks. For the Greek is, *παραδειγμάτισαι*—that is, to *disgrace*, to *defame*, or, as S. Augustine (*Epist. 59, ad Paulinum*) says, rendering literally, "*to make an example of.*" It was the custom in Crete to lead adulteresses through the midst of the streets, as they did captives at Rome, that they might be gazed at and derided. Whence that ancient punishment by law against bawds: "Let bawds and adulterers be caned through the public streets of the city, that they may be reviled and derided." And the line of Propertius: "Not even if the infamous one should traverse the whole city."

Was minded to put her away privily. By the way of secret divorce, giving her privily a bill of divorcement, as Abul. says on the passage, *quæst. 39*; or rather, and in a more honourable way for her, by leaving her on the plea of travel, as going away into a far country. So Maldonatus. Whence the Syriac translates: "*And he thought of leaving her secretly:*" and the Arabic, "*Since he did not wish to put her to public shame, he thought upon a private dismissal.*"

Verse 20- *But while he thought on these things*. He had evidently not resolved upon them. For this was his first thought, and, as it were, the first motive of his mind. *Behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*

of Origen, S. Basil, Theophylact, S. Bernard (*Hom. 2 super Missus est*). S. Brigit asserts that the same was revealed to her (lib. 7, *Revelat.* c. 25). Whence Salmeron (lib. 3, c. 30) supports the same opinion by thirteen reasons. But, 3, plainly and surely, Joseph, seeing the Blessed Virgin with child, was astonished at the novelty of the thing, and his mind was agitated by contending and fluctuating emotions, and he reasoned somewhat in this way: “I know that this Virgin is most holy, wherefore I do not believe that she has been false to her troth, plighted to me. Still, she is with child, and I know not by me. But by whom I know not. Can it be by a former husband? Or can she have suffered violence on her journey, when she went to visit Elizabeth? Can she have suffered illusion from some spirit during sleep? Or, what would be more consonant with her sanctity, is she with child by an angel, or by the Deity Himself? Well, however the case may be, I am unwilling to retain her, if an angel, or God Himself, desires to have her. Wherefore I will resign her, and put her away from me.”

God permitted this to take place in order that the conception of the Blessed Virgin by the Holy Ghost might be attested unto all, both by Joseph and by the Angel. Thus God permitted S. Thomas to doubt concerning Christ’s Resurrection, that he, touching Christ’s very wounds, might bear an irrefragable testimony to the same Resurrection.

Joseph, who was a righteous man, teaches husbands and believers not to suspect evil concerning just and holy persons upon slight grounds, but to wait for proofs. They should not be too ready to *infer* guilt, but should put the most favourable construction they can upon everything.

You may ask, why did not Joseph interrogate the Blessed Virgin, wherefore, and by whom she was with child? I reply, that it is merely the first thought which arose in Joseph’s mind, which is referred to, and which, out of modesty, he kept to himself. And he was shortly afterwards anticipated by the Angel, who answered in behalf of the Virgin, and exonerated him by saying that she had conceived by the Holy Ghost.

The Blessed Virgin was unwilling, of her own accord, to make known this divine secret to Joseph, in order that she might not seem to boast of her own gifts, so wonderful and so divine; but she confided all to God, and God’s providential care, most certainly trusting that God would defend her good repute and her innocence, and either in His own time open out the whole matter, as she had seen that He had lately done in the case of her cousin Elizabeth, or else would order all things to His own greater glory, and therefore to the greater honour and reverence of this, her conception. From whence, see here and admire the greatness of soul, and the lofty resignation and confidence of the Blessed Virgin in God, whereby she put away from her all this peril and fear of dark suspicion and infamy. And herein she has given a singular example of equanimity and confidence to wives who have jealous husbands, that they, too, should put their trust in God, that God will make clear their innocence and chastity, will protect them, and make them a praise, as he did in this case of the Blessed Virgin. Thus S. Jerome says: “This is the testimony to Mary’s purity, that Joseph, knowing her chastity, and wondering at what had happened, hides in silence the mystery of which he was ignorant.” And S. Ambrose (*in Luc.* i.) says: “The Lord preferred that some

God made all things in heaven and earth; but in the seventh day, or the sabbath, He rested from all His work.

Tropologically, by this forty-fold number of generations is signified the life of the body, as compounded of the four elements. For this life standeth in keeping the ten commandments of God, which are perfected by the four Gospels. For ten into four makes forty. So Salmeron, so even S. Augustine, and from him Peter Bongus, *On the Mysteries of Numbers*, Num. XIV.: “The three divisions,” he says, “in the generation of Christ, hint at the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is laid down concordantly by the Law and the Gospel. For three signifies faith in the Trinity, four the evangelical doctrine, ten the institution of the Law.” The same author adds shortly afterwards: “That the number fourteen should be thrice repeated signifies true religion. For four and ten indicate the New and Old Testament. For the way to Christ is preached through the Ten Commandments of the Law, and the four Gospels; so, however, that we should consecrate whatever is ascribed to the Trinity, that is, to God, because no commandment is fulfilled unless this number is preserved in the worship of God. By the type of this number, moreover, Ezekiel (chap. xl.) beheld in the fourteenth year after the smiting of the city, a new city, even the Church, which Christ, born and dying, founded in the fourteenth generation after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldees, as Cassiodorus remarks (*in Ps. xiv., sub finem*). Lastly, in the forty second year after Christ’s Passion, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by Titus and Vespasian to avenge His death—as S. Jerome observes on the words of the Psalm: “In the next generation let his name be clean put out.”

Ver. 18.—*Now the generation of Christ was in this wise.* The Birth of Christ happened in this manner. For *Birth*, the Greek has not *γένεσις*, *i.e., generation*, properly so called, but *γέννησις*, *i.e., rise, conception, generation, nativity*. When any one arises he is conceived, is begotten, is born.

When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Syriac, “*of the Spirit of holiness*”—that is, the Spirit who is holy, and the Author and Fountain of all holiness.

God willed the Blessed Virgin to be betrothed to Joseph—1. Because Joseph appears to have been the nearest heir of David’s kingdom, that it might devolve from him upon Christ, as from a father to a son, by due order and right of succession, as I have said, ver. 16. 2. Because Joseph was a most holy man, like unto the patriarch Joseph, of whose chastity and virtue he partook, as well as of his name. He was called Joseph—*i.e., increased*—for he was enriched with great gifts and graces from God. Thus S. Bernard, *Hom. 2 super Missus est*.

You may ask whether it be here meant that the Blessed Virgin was espoused to Joseph only by betrothal, or by an actual marriage contract and celebration of nuptials; and so, whether Christ was incarnate, and conceived of a virgin who was betrothed only, or of one who was actually married? For to a virgin thus betrothed Gabriel was sent to announce the Incarnation of Christ. (Luke i. 38.) And the Virgin, consenting to his message, and saying, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word,” immediately, in that very instant, conceived Christ. Many are of opinion that the Blessed Virgin was only espoused by betrothal, or *per verba de futuro*, by which only a promise of marriage takes place. So S. Hilary, *in loc.*; S. Basil, *Hom. on the Human Generation of Christ*; Origen, *Hom. I, on divers passages of the Gospels*. But others think, with better reason, that the Virgin was espoused not merely by betrothal, but by marriage, *per verba de præsenti*—by an actual nuptial contract. This is proved:—1. Because Joseph is called in the verse following, and in ver. 16, the husband of Mary. This must mean that he had married her. 2. Joseph wished to put her away, as being with child, as it is said in the verse following. He had therefore taken her to him to wife; for no one puts away what he has not. 3. Because “betrothed” (Luke ii. 5) is interpreted to mean married. Yea, Joseph called her his wife. She was therefore already married, and introduced into the house of her husband, Joseph, as his wife, that, by this means, Joseph might be the attesting witness of her virginity, and the guardian and nourisher both of herself and her Child Jesus. Consider, also, that the Blessed Virgin, as soon as she had received Gabriel’s message, being now full of the WORD, visited Elizabeth, and abode with her three months. From whence it does not seem that she there celebrated her marriage with Joseph, nor yet after her return to Nazareth, for there exists no trace of such an event. So that she must have celebrated this marriage before Gabriel’s message, and the Incarnation of the WORD. Neither would it have been becoming that an unmarried virgin should undertake so great a journey into a mountainous country, without a husband, or companion, or without her guardian sending a maid, or some female relation with her. 4. Because it was plainly befitting that Christ should be born of a woman who was actually married, in order that he might not be despised by the Jews as illegitimate, but might be received as a legitimate son. And this is why Joseph is called Christ’s father. Finally, offspring is the proper fruit of wedlock. Thus Jerome, Haymo, Chrysostom, Theophylact, Ambrose, Jansenius, Suarez, and others, *passim*.

It may be objected—1. That the angel says to Joseph, “Fear not to take Mary thy wife.” Therefore, he had not taken her to wife, but only espoused her by betrothal. I reply—to *take*, here means the same thing as to *keep*, and *retain*: for the angel calls her *his wife*. They were therefore married. The Hebrew verbs often signify not only inchoate, but continuous action. The meaning, therefore, is—“Dismiss not, O Joseph, thy wife Mary, but keep and retain her.” For nothing is put away save what has been received and possessed. 2. The Virgin is here called *betrothed*, before they came together, therefore before marriage. In reply, I deny the consequence. To come together does not here signify to contract marriage, nor yet to cohabit, but to make use of marriage already contracted. 3. Why is she here spoken of, not as married, but as espoused? I reply, she is called *espoused* or *betrothed*, because her husband had not known her; and therefore she was as a bride, not yet married to her husband, but

Moreover S. Thomas (3 *part, quæst.* 32, *art.* 1 *et seq*) teaches that the words “by the Holy Ghost” signify three things: 1. That of the pure love of God and the Holy Spirit, without any human merits, the Incarnation of the Lord was accomplished. 2. Of the same Grace of God and the Holy Spirit, without previous merits, He was conceived. Whence S. Augustine, c. *de Prædest. Sanct.* c. 15, proposes Christ, as it were, the ideal of election and the elect. “Whatsoever man is a Christian, he becomes such from the beginning of his faith by that self-same grace by which, at the first, Christ was made man: by the same Spirit a Christian is born again, by whom Christ was born; remission of sins is effected in us by the self-same Spirit by whom it was brought about that Christ should have no sin.” 3. Christ was holy, by virtue of his conception. For, like as a man, who, by ordinary generation, is propagated from Adam, a sinner, is by virtue of his conception born a sinner, so Christ, who was conceived, and, as it were, propagated by the Holy Ghost, was conceived holy by virtue of his conception. For that which the Holy Ghost worketh can be nothing else save warmth and fire. 4. *By the Holy Ghost*, signifies that He, in the formation of the Humanity of Christ, transposed all His sanctity into It (so far as a creature’s capacity would allow of such a thing, and so far as a creature can become like the Creator), and, as it were, transformed It into Himself: so that, next to Himself, He made It to be a pattern and prototype of holiness, that from It and according to It He might, as it were, express and depict all other holiness, both of all angels, and all men. Therefore the humanity of Christ was the most perfect, special, and most holy work of the Holy Ghost, in which He Himself constituted a fount of all sanctity, which, by its own purity, might wash away the filth of all sins, and, so far as it is concerned, sanctify all sinners.

Moreover, S. Thomas (*quæst.* 32, *art.* 2) teaches that the preposition “by,” in the expression *by the Holy Ghost*, signifies that Christ is consubstantial with the Holy Ghost, as touching his Godhead, not as touching his manhood, which He wrought in Christ. This, however, S. Augustine denies.

Verse 19- *Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily*
 1. S. Chrysostom (*in loco*), S. Augustine (*Epist.* 52, *ad Macedon.*), Justin M (*contra Tryphon.*), are of opinion, that Joseph suspected evil of the Blessed Virgin, as though she had conceived by another man. They think that this is hinted at in the expression, *make her a public example*. But we say, far be any such suspicions concerning a virgin so holy, or a man so just. How, indeed, could Joseph have suspected adultery in such a wife, or uncleanness in her parents’ house? 2. Others think that Joseph wished to put away the Blessed Virgin out of extreme reverence, because he thought himself unworthy to have to wife one who was with child by the Holy Ghost. Whence they are also of opinion that S. Joseph accompanied the Blessed Virgin when she visited Elizabeth, and heard her saluted as Mother of God, and therefore thought himself unworthy of her. This is the opinion

precocious do thus often die. Moreover, the brethren of the Lord are called His kinsmen. For, as S. Jerome says (*Cont. Helvid.*), brethren are so called in four ways: by nature, race, relationship, affection. People are brethren by nature, who are born of the same parents, by race, who belong to the same nation, as S. Paul calls the Jews his brethren (Rom. ix. 1), by kinship, as cousins are called brethren in Scripture, by affection, as when Christians love one another with mutual fraternal love. For this is the love of the brotherhood, which S. Paul so often commands.

She was found with child, by the Holy Ghost. Observe that Joseph understood by her appearance, that his wife, the Blessed Virgin, had conceived. But whether he knew that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, or not, is doubtful. S. Basil, Origen, Theophylact, and others, hold the affirmative. But the contrary is more probable, because Joseph wished to put her away, but is forbidden by the angel, who removes his scruple, adding, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Therefore, before the revelation of the angel, he did not know this, because had he known it, he would not have wished to put her away.

It is said, therefore, that the Blessed Virgin was found with child of the Holy Ghost, because she had verily conceived by Him. The expression, *by the Holy Ghost*, must be referred to the words *with child*, not to *was found*. So the rest of the Fathers and Interpreters, *passim*. Origen adds that, "She was found by the angels, for they knew that she had conceived by the Holy Ghost."

Of the Holy Ghost. Not as though Christ were framed of the substance of the Holy Spirit, as is the case with other offspring, nor of the Holy Ghost as a father; because Christ, *quà man*, was not like to the Holy Ghost, who in His nature is God; but of the Holy Ghost as an agent and artificer. Thus S. Ambrose, *in Luc.* i. 35. *Of the Holy Ghost*, not, therefore, as of the Father, but, as it were, supplying the concourse of the father. For the Holy Ghost supplied the place of a father to Christ, through His power and operation. So S. Ambrose c. 2, *de Spiritu Sancto*, c. 5, and S. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, c. 39. For the substance of our Lord's body was supplied by the Blessed Virgin, as His only human parent. Strictly speaking, *by* denotes the efficient cause, *of* the material cause—as we say in the Creed: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

You may ask—why does not Matthew say also, "With child by the Eternal Father, and by the Son. as well as by the Holy Ghost?" It is replied that he might have said this with equal truth. For it is an axiom among Theologians, that the operations of the Holy Trinity, *ad extra*—that is, with reference to the universe of created things—are common to all the Three Divine Persons. But he preferred to say, "By the Holy Ghost," because, as power is appropriated to the Father, and wisdom to the Son, so love, goodness, and grace, which especially shine forth in this work of the Incarnation, are attributed to the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son by spiration, being, as it were, the term of the ideal love of the Father and the Son.

only promised. So S. Chrysostom. Hence Peter Chrysologus (*Serm.* 175) says, Joseph was a husband in name only, by consent of his spouse; that is, he was accounted her husband by the bond, not the consummation of marriage.

That there was, however, a real marriage between Joseph and the Blessed Virgin is certain from the words of the Gospel, and the common agreement of theologians; and the axiom of lawyers, that—"Consent, not consummation, validates marriage." Whence S. Augustine (lib. 1, *de Nuptiis*, c. 11) says—"The good of marriage was fulfilled in those parents of Christ. There was offspring, fidelity, a sacrament (for these are the three goods of marriage). We recognize the offspring, the Lord Jesus Himself; the fidelity, for there was no adultery; the sacrament, for there was no divorce." He teaches the same more at large against Julian the Pelagian (lib. 5), who denied the marriage of Joseph and Mary. In chap. 9, he maintains that the *jus matrimonii* is not repugnant to a vow of chastity. By marriage, I possess a right over my wife, but because of my vow, I cannot use that right lawfully. If I do use it, I sin against my vow, not my marriage. That is, I do what is, technically, an irreligious, not an unjust act. For there is not adultery, as it would be, if the wife were joined in marriage. Joseph, therefore, had by matrimony, a power over the Blessed Virgin, but by his purpose, and as it would seem by his vow of chastity, he would not use this power. To have a right or power to do a thing, and to use that power, are wholly different things. The first is necessary for valid matrimony, but not the second.

This right of cohabitation, and *quasi* dominion over a wife, in the case of married virgins, has several true and real, not fictitious consequences. The first is, that a virgin bride cannot marry another husband. The second is, that although the vow be broken by cohabitation, it is not fornication. The third, that offspring divinely granted and born (as Christ in the present instance was conceived of the Holy Ghost) is accounted legitimate as being born in wedlock.

From all this, it may be gathered that the marriage of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Joseph was not only real matrimony, but lawful, yea, holy—*real*, because the essence of wedlock consists in the mutual delivery of power over each other's body, even though this power be never exercised. And a vow of virginity takes away this power and right from no one, but only renders its exercise unlawful. It is after a similar manner that the *power* is separated from the *use* of a thing, in the case of certain religious, who remain owners of their paternal inheritance, but who, on account of their vow of poverty, are not able to make use of it. It was lawful marriage, because, although the Blessed Virgin had made a vow of virginity, yet she lawfully, and without peril of a breach of her vow, engaged in marriage, because she knew by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that Joseph would never use his power and marital rights to the detriment of her vow. So St.

Augustine, *de S. Virgin.*, c. 4, and theologians, *passim*. It is, moreover, probable that the Blessed Virgin Mary had revealed this, her vow, to Joseph before marriage, and that he had consented to it. Some add, that he had promised to be the guardian of her vow. It was holy marriage, because by means of it Joseph protected the good repute and the virginity of Blessed Mary; and became the guardian, nourisher, and educator of the Child Jesus. What were more holy than this?

See S. Thomas, 3 part 29. 2. 1. *in corpore*, where he assigns many reasons why Christ was born of an espoused virgin. And he adds that there might be a fifth reason why the Mother of the Lord was espoused and a virgin, in order that in her person both virginity and matrimony might be honoured against the heretics, who attack either one or the other. The holy martyr Ignatius, cited by S. Jerome, gives yet another reason—in order that her child-bearing might be concealed from the devil, so that he thought that Christ was not born of a virgin, but of a wife.

Observe here, *tropologically*, in the Blessed Virgin and Joseph the utmost height of angelic purity and virginity. And thus, the Blessed Virgin has communicated this gift of conjugal chastity to several eminent persons, specially devoted to her, as to S. Pulcheria, and Martian, to SS. Julian and Basilissa, to whom, in the first night after their vow of chastity, Christ appeared, accompanied by a vast throng of men in white robes, on the one hand, and the Blessed Virgin, girt about with a virgin throng, on the other hand. They who were with Christ chanted forth—“Thou hast conquered Julian, thou hast conquered.” And they who were with the Blessed Virgin replied—“Blessed art thou, Basilissa, who hast despised earthly marriage, and prepared thyself for eternal glory.” Wherefore Julian was the spiritual ancestor of innumerable believers in Christ and martyrs, and Basilissa, by word and example, was the mother of innumerable virgins of Christ.

Also S. Henry I., or as some say, II., Emperor of Germany led such a life with his wife Cunegundes, of whom, when he was dying, he said to her parents—“Lo! a virgin I received her from you, a virgin I restore her to you.” Such, too, were S. Cæcilia, with her spouse Valerian, to whom the Blessed Virgin sent by the hands of angels crowns of roses and lilies.

Symbolically, in this marriage and family union of Joseph with Mary there was an image of the Sacred Trinity. For Joseph represented the Eternal Father, the Blessed Virgin the Holy Ghost, both because she was most holy, and because she had conceived by the Holy Spirit. Christ represented Himself, even the Son of God. Whence, 1. As there is in the Sacred Trinity an essence of Deity in Three Persons, so here was there one marriage and one perfect family, consisting of three persons, namely, Joseph, Mary, and Christ. 2. As in the Holy Trinity the Father spiritually begets the Son, and breathes the Holy Ghost, so here the Blessed Virgin spiritually—not carnally, but by the power of the Holy Ghost—conceived and brought forth Christ. 3. In the Holy Trinity, the Father begets the Son, as light emits light: whence we sing in the Creed, “Light of Light, very God of very God;” so the Blessed Virgin, as the Star of the Sea, brought forth Christ, who is “the Brightness of Eternal Light,” and

the “Mirror without a spot.” (Wisd. vii. 25.) Whence, like as a star, without any diminution of itself, sends forth its rays, so did the Blessed Virgin, without any derogation to herself, bring forth Christ the Light of the world. “Neither do the star’s rays diminish its lustre, nor did the Son of the Virgin take away her maiden purity and integrity,” says S. Bernard. (*Hom. 2 super Missus est*) Whence also those words of Simeon concerning Christ, “A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.”

This family was then, as it were, a heaven upon earth—a family, not so much of three human persons as of three embodied angels—yea, symbolically, as it were, of three Divine Persons. Therefore it is not doubtful that it was thronged with angels, ministering to the Virgin, as Queen of Heaven, and to Christ, as their Lord and their God. Yea, they were amazed, and had the utmost desire to behold the WORD Incarnate. Therefore, that house, as it were heaven, was concealing an admirable mystery. Black without, but fair within, “as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon” (Cant. i. 5), says Rupert. Whence John Gerson (*Sermon on the Nativity*) exclaims in wonder—“O, how delectable to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was that house’s Trinity, Christ, Mary, Joseph. Nothing dearer, nothing better, nothing on earth more excellent. Heaven envied earth such inhabitants—inhabitants more befitting heaven than earth.”

Tropologically, Let husbands and wives imitate the Blessed Virgin and Joseph in purity, in sanctity, in patience, and charity, bearing one another’s burdens. There was in this family of Joseph, Mary, and Christ, the utmost concord amongst all, the utmost love, the utmost reverence, humility, piety, help, and mutual compliance. From it, not only all bickering was absent, but even the very lightest suspicion of any evil thing. Hence such a family deserved to have Christ, the Holy of Holies, for its offspring. In our day, there are often in families depraved, disobedient, proud, quarrelsome, impure children, because their parents are such. Like father, like child. What he sees and hears his father and mother do, that he also imitates and imbibes. Children ever ape their parents.

Before they came together. Understand this not as though they afterwards came together for the marital debt, as the impure Helvidius maintained, who denied that the Blessed Virgin was always a virgin, and asserted that she afterwards became by Joseph the mother of those who, in the Gospel, are called the Lord’s brethren. S. Jerome confutes him at length, and shows that nothing is meant here except the miraculous conception of Christ by a pure virgin. Thus we say in common speech, “Such a one had grey hairs before he was an old man,” meaning that it was remarkable that he was early grey-headed, even though he never became an old man, but died before he came to old age. Similarly also we say, “His boy was wise before he came to man’s estate,” meaning that he was of precocious intellect, even though he died before he was of mature age; as those who are